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BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY



PROPAGATION OF WILD GEESE

Thus far real success in propagating wild geese has been had only with the Canada goose and remarks in this circular apply particularly to that species.

PERMITS

No wild geese may be legally captured, confined, bought, sold, or shipped for propagating purposes without permit from the United States Department of Agriculture. Application for such permits should be addressed to the Biological Survey. Many States also require permits to be taken out for the propagation of wild fowl and in States so doing both State and Federal permits are necessary. Addresses of State officials from whom permits can be obtained may be had by addressing the Biological Survey. The laws of some States do not permit propagation of wild fowl; a summary of all State game laws may be obtained from the Biological Survey.

RANGE

Geese need room, and the ideal range should include a pond or a section of lake or sound shore, together with ample pasturage and some shade. Shelters are not required. Pinioned birds (and the primary stock of most breeders will be pinioned) need protection, especially from dogs. A dog-proof fence is needed about the breeding area at least, and if the goslings are to be protected from small vermin the lower 2 feet of the fence should consist of 1 inch mesh wire netting or of boards.

BREEDING STOCK

Propagated birds are more desirable as breeders than birds captured in the wild state. The latter may not mate and settle down to breeding for several years while reared birds sometimes breed when one year old. Geese remain mated for life and it is advisable to handle the birds in mated pairs and not to attempt to break or mix pairs. These birds live to a considerable age (50 years or more) and are better breeders at 30 years than when young.

NESTING

Geese are somewhat temperamental about their first nest and should be left entirely undisturbed when mating and selecting a nest site for the first time. In succeeding years they more boldly select and hold their chosen home, resorting when possible to the former site. If the range has tussocks of grass, no nesting material need be furnished; in their absence it is advisable to supply hay or straw. Nesting takes place early in spring and the number of eggs varies from 4 to 7, the usual number being 5. The female sits very close and the gander zealously guards the nesting site. At this time the birds must be fed and watered near the nest.



## CARE OF YOUNG

If on good pasture where they can get all the green food they want the goslings require little care other than by their parents. It has been found best to prevent them from getting into water until they are about ten days old. Drinking water should be supplied in fountains that the goslings can not wash themselves in; the water should frequently be renewed, and kept in the shade. Shade is necessary also for protection of the goslings from heat.

## FOOD

Geese are grazers primarily and can live indefinitely on pasture that will support cattle. Before and during the breeding season, however, it is advisable to feed grain. Almost any kind will be eaten but a mixture of 75 per cent oats and 25 per cent corn is recommended prior to egg-laying, and just the reverse of these proportions during the incubation period. Corn is fed regularly in winter, especially when pasturage is not available, but green feed may be supplied at this season by a patch of winter rye. The goslings as well as the adults can subsist wholly upon green food, but some breeders advise feeding them stale bread moistened with milk. This is laid on boards where it will dry up rather than sour if not eaten. When the young are ten days old and browsing actively a supplementary ration of cracked corn or scratch feed may be given; and when they are growing their feathers, feed whole wheat. Keep a plentiful supply of ground oyster shell and clean gravel always available.

## PINIONING

In localities where geese can easily glean a living in winter it has been found that propagated birds will remain about their home even if not pinioned. However, in most cases it will no doubt prove desirable to render the birds incapable of flight. To pinion an adult bird, raise the thumb of the wing (at base of last joint) and tie a cord tightly around the last joint well up under the thumb. Have ready some tannic acid which is in powder form. With a pair of stout sharp shears or scissors clip off the joint close below the cord, removing all or nearly all of the long flight feathers or primary quills. At once take a pinch of tannic acid and press it firmly into the wound to check bleeding. The cord should be removed a few days later when the wound is healing. Pinioning goslings is very simple. Operate when the birds are 4 to 7 days old, if in good condition, simply snipping off the last joint and dipping the stump into tannic acid. Pinion only one wing.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Additional directions for the care of geese, as well as of other game birds, may be found in the following publication:

JOB, H. K.

The propagation of wild birds.

Published by National Association of Audubon Societies,  
1974 Broadway, New York City. 1915. \$2.15.

